THE ARCHITECT ACADEMICIANS.

You might, without the slightest impropriety, have been more stringent in your remarks on the Architect Academicians, very little delicacy being due to persons who show themselves wholly indifferent as to the figure their own art makes at the Academy's exhibitions: contenting themselves with the title of R.A., they leave it to the painters to exhibit, for they seem of late years to consider it derogatory from their own dignity to do so. This season there is not a single drawing by any one of them, not even the professor of architecture. They desert their standard at the very time they ought to have supported it energetically, and invited others to flock to it, in order to render the display of architectural drawings one of far more than ordinary merit and interest in this memorable '51 year.

Mr. Barry, for one, can be at no loss for subjects, because, besides that the Palace of Westminster would furnish many that have not yet been represented, it is to be presumed that there must be something worth showing us within such mansions as Bridgwater-house and Cliefden.

It has been said before now—if I mistake not in the "Art Journal"—that architects ought not to be elected of the academy; neither indeed ought they, if they will do nothing for it, after they are received into it. In fact, it almost looks at present as if it were tacitly understood to let the painters have their way in everything, and all but formally turn out architecture from their exhibition. Yet what man of any spirit—what artist with any respect for himself or his art, would consent to accept, or, having accepted, to *retain* a *seat* in the Academy upon such conditions—implied or not expressed? Or if there be no such conditions, no restraint, wherefore do the Architect Academicians act as if they existed?

Silence is sometimes as significant as words, and architecture seems to have been passed over in complete silence in the complimentary toasts and speeches at the Academy's dinner. The Prince did not so much as allude to it in his speech; though, had he done so, it would probably have been with reference to Mr. Paxton and the "Crystal Palace."

Such being the slights put upon architects, we look to you, Mr. Editor, for vindicating its claims all the more strenuously as fearlessly, and resenting the treatment it has received at the hands of the Academy.

AN ARCHITECT, BUT NOT AN R.A.

RUSKIN AND HIS REVIEWERS—THIRD LETTER.*

THE article on the "Seven Lamps," in the *North American Review*, is stamped by respectable dulness, and so entirely innocent of any forcible remarks, as to call for no other remark here than that it is little more than the echo of the complimentary effusions on the part of English reviewers concerning the same work; although it was reasonably to be presumed that an American would see many things in a different light, and would more especially consider what effect—if any at all—Ruskinism is likely to have upon the architects and architecture of his own country. One piece of information, indeed, we do obtain from that *Review*, since it appears from the title at the head of the article that the "Seven Lamps" has been reprinted at New York, in a *duodecimo* volume of 186 pages,—a form that contrasts not a little with the aristocratic "*imperial*" livery affected for his books by Mr. Ruskin himself.

The *American* has been soon despatched: *Tait's Magazine*,—that is, its article on the "Stones of Venice," will detain us rather longer, there being some stuff in it which shows that the writer is competently prepared to take up the subject. While he is no very great admirer of Mr. Ruskin's style, which, like myself, he thinks, is occasionally, at least, "in imitation of Mr. Carlyle;" he is opposed to and contradicts him upon several points. Instead of taking his cue from the fulsomely laudatory and affectedly sentimental tone in which many others have *reviewed* Mr. Ruskin's architectural writings, he does not scruple to accuse him of indulging in "boyish pedantry," and in "vague rhapsody." Among other not particularly flattering remarks, he says: "In sooth, much of this volume is eminently childish;"—to which I myself should add,—and even decidedly silly; from which opinion few, I think, will dissent, if they turn to pages 339 and 341 of the "Stones of Venice," where one would take him to be laughing at his readers, and endeavouring to ascertain how much fooling and absurdity they would tolerate from him. The writer in *Tait* points also to some of Mr. Ruskin's unaccountable antipathies,—as they may very justly be termed, since he himself does not attempt to account for them; wherefore we are justified in concluding that it was not in his power to do so; and, consequently, that his off-hand and wholesale censure of our English Perpendicular Gothic, and of the entire art of the Renaissance is to be accounted as no more than sheer abuse. And it merely bespeaks consummate vanity in Mr. Ruskin to suppose, and insolence to demand, that people should, without any proof or explanation on his part, join him in his sweeping and utter condemnation of all that has been done in architecture during the last three or four centuries. Monstrous, however, for its ruthless *destructiveness* as that part of his doctrine is, few of his reviewers have protested against it: some have not even noticed it at all, wherefore it may be suspected that it is perfect matter of indifference to them though it should completely upset—as, if adopted, it must do—our present code of architectural taste, and the whole of our actual system in secular architecture.

Mr. Ruskin's morbid and extravagant NATURALISM does not pass unreproved by the writer in *Tait*, yet it requires to be far more fully exposed; and were that done, I think he would stand convicted of having fallen into a gross and fundamental error—no less a one than that of confounding together the *natural* and the *artificial*, owing to his not discerning what is the proper province of the latter, and in how exceedingly imperfect and limited a degree such an art as architecture admits of anything like "the imitation of nature." When, therefore, we find him floundering about in so stupendous a mistake and its consequences, we are justified in asking whether he ought not to go to school, instead of setting himself up as the teacher of others. The reviewer in *Tait's Magazine* seems to be inclined to think so; for, after quoting Mr. R.'s extravagant notion of our building "a score of cathedrals each to illustrate a single flower!" an idea hardly reconcileable with sanity of mind; he says, "There is not quite difference enough between this passage and nonsense for any reasonable purpose; and the reader who gets nothing but this for his pains, after having accompanied Mr. Ruskin's lectures, may reasonably think that his time has been wasted; and if he intends to devote himself to the pursuit of architectural truth, he will look out for another teacher and guide."

All the more to be regretted, then, is it that he should have been cried up as the very best teacher and guide, and ignorantly, or else treacherously, recommended as such to the public, or to those who are themselves too ignorant to detect, or be on their guard against the various errors and absurdities which constitute the staple of "Ruskinism." That Mr. Ruskin has his lucid intervals, is not to be denied, but it is not every one of our readers that can distinguish between "Philip sober and Philip drunk;" for even some of his reviewers do not seem to have been able to do so. On the contrary, many perhaps admire him most, and think him then at his greatest, when he is at his maddest; and when, in the opinion of the sober, he seems to need, if not exactly "a strait-waistcoat of perpendicular lines," as he tells us our English Gothic was put into, a garment of similar name.

I have not been able to learn whether the "Seven Lamps" has been translated into any other language, or whether his doctrine has excited any attention on the continent. If his books have reached there, his fanciful mysticism may perhaps have recommended them in Germany, but his opinions—more especially some of those now put forth in the "Stones of Venice"—must be utterly disrelished by German architects. Nearly all of the numerous structures erected within the last thirty years at both Munich and Berlin belong to those styles which Pope Ruskin—for he seems to fancy himself infallible—excommunicates and lays under ban. Therefore his doctrines will probably be stoutly resisted by German and other continental architects, although they meet with scarcely any opposition from professional men here at home, who, if they dislike them—as some most assuredly must do—seem also to despise them as unworthy of refutation; notwithstanding that they are now tauntingly told that they will be compelled to adopt Mr. Ruskin's views and doctrines, in spite of themselves. The only voice that has yet been boldly raised against him by an architect is that of the author of the "Something on Ruskinism," who, if he has done nothing else, has inflicted some well-merited ridicule upon one who browbeats the whole profession, and seems determined to bring them, and their works, and their teachings, into contempt. Are we to submit to the arrogance, or the public to be duped by a man who, setting himself up for a teacher, gravely assures his readers that it is "the *function* of architecture to tell us about nature!" Surely that sentence alone is sufficient to disqualify him, proving, as it does, how completely unfit he is for his self-assumed *function* of teacher, since he mistakes the very *nature* of architecture itself. ZETA.

* See p. 311, *ante*.

THE NATIONAL SURVEYS.

CIVIL SURVEYORS.

AMONG the various benefits conferred upon society by the increased progress of civilisation, there are few more generally advantageous to a nation such as England than a correct survey of the entire country. The principal value of such a survey consists in its entirety, its uniformity, and the accuracy of its details, and these advantages can only be fully obtained by making it a national work, completed under the authority of the Government.

The Ordnance Survey of Ireland, now nearly completed, is at once the most perfect, the most beautiful, and the most useful modern work of this character that has ever yet been executed. This survey—so valuable for all purposes of sanitary improvement, for draining and cultivating land, for laying out roads, canals, and railways, for selecting suitable sites for docks and harbours, and for all other operations of a commercial, agricultural, or mineral character, calculated to increase the wealth of the nation and promote the circulation of capital and the advancement of civilisation,—has already occupied the Government upwards of twenty-five years, and is not yet quite finished.

According to the same rate of progress the surveys of England, Scotland, and Wales will take upwards of seventy years for their completion, by which time the entire face of the country will probably be changed, and the survey rendered, in a great measure, useless.

At the present time the suspension or completion of the various railways, &c., has thrown out of employment a large number of that deserving but ill-used class of persons, namely, engineering surveyors, who have for the most part raised themselves above the ordinary level of the profession solely by their own energy and talent, and upwards of 2,000 of whom are at the present time in a state of partial destitution, many of absolute want, and most of whom would gladly accept of employment at two or three pounds per week, and a trifle for travelling expenses. If but one half of this number were employed, at the public expense, in the ordnance survey of Great Britain, the work might be efficiently completed in eight or ten years, and the money thus expended become the means of relieving the wants of a highly meritorious class of the community as well as conferring a lasting benefit upon the nation. While thousands,

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